

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION
ACTIONS
JANUARY 12, 2005
6:00 P.M.
CIVIL SERVICE CONFERENCE ROOM
3RD FLOOR, CITY HALL

Roll Call

Chairman Michael Finn called the meeting to order. In attendance was Commissioner Geraldine George, Commissioner Frank Caracansi, Chief Examiner John Whitcomb. Also in attendance were Kelly Grover, Steven Kleppin, Laura Vasile and Leon Vinci.

NEW BUSINESS:

Assistant Planning Director - Steven Kleppin had filed an appeal for the Assistant Planning Director position. He wanted the Commission to review his application again. Mr. Kleppin stated that as he reviewed the qualifications for the position, he felt that he was qualified for the position. Mr. Kleppin stated that he didn't understand how the Civil Service process works and how decisions were made. Chairman Finn explained that all applications come to the Personnel Office first. The applications are screened to make sure the diplomas/transcripts are attached. If the applications are considered complete, they are then sent to the Civil Service Commission. The Commission will review all the applications individually. The Commission meets (after reviewing the applications) and decides who does and does not meet the qualifications. Commissioner Caracansi states that he was not at the meeting when Mr. Kleppin's application was reviewed. Upon reviewing Mr. Kleppin's application, Commissioner Caracansi asked was the question as to whether or not he had the experience? In Commissioner Caracansi's opinion, Mr. Kleppin certainly has the educational background. Chairman Finn looks again at Mr. Kleppin's application. Commissioner Caracansi asks Mr. Kleppin if he is currently a Land Use Inspector for the City of Stamford. Mr. Kleppin responds yes. Commissioner Caracansi asks if that position is within the Planning Department. Mr. Kleppin states that the position is in the Planning and Zoning Department. He splits his time between Zoning and Protective Studies including GIS (mapping and maintaining the database). (Difficult to hear Mr. Kleppin. Could not hear the balance of his explanation.) Mr. Kleppin's job title is Inspector and he deals with zoning enforcement and zoning permitting. He deals with single family residential development and screening of subdivisions. His functions are very similar to the Zoning Enforcement Officer. He reports to the Zoning Enforcement Officer and the Director of the Environmental Protection Board and the Land Use Bureau Chief. Chairman Finn stated that he wanted Mr. Kleppin to present his case to the Commission. After everyone speaks, his application will be reviewed and voted on.

Health Director - Leon Vinci spoke about his appeal for the Health Director position. He feels that he has very strong qualifications for the position. In terms of experience, he was Health Director for Middletown for approximately 20 years and he took a new job in another part of the country as a Health Director. He then went into private public health consulting and other work. He has always like to work within the community. He decided it was time to leave private work and go back into the community. Mr. Vinci is a native of Southern Connecticut and his wife is from New York and he thought Danbury was the ideal future home for them. He would like to relocate back to Connecticut. Some of Mr. Vinci's consulting work is in Connecticut. Mr. Vinci wasn't sure if his application was unclear or if the Commission had questions about his application that he could answer. Commissioner George asked if he was presently the CEO of Health Commission Consultants. Mr. Vinci answered yes, that is his private consulting firm. When he started the firm approximately 15 years ago, it was kind of a hobby. For example, he would go to the town of Westbrook for public health inspector duties to inspect restaurants that are open seasonally because there is no full-time inspector on staff. After his position in Lancaster County ended, he took a contract with the State Health Department and he wrote the state bio-terrorism response plan. That led to other jobs primarily in public health emergency response work with health departments, police departments and fire departments.

Commissioner Caracansi mentions that he was not at the meeting when the Health Director applications were reviewed. Chairman Finn asks what Registrar of Vital Statistics is. In Middletown and Lincoln, the Registrar of Vital Statistics is the person responsible for birth, death, and marriages licenses. Mr. Vinci tallied the statistics for birth rates, etc. Chairman Finn stated that Mr. Vinci's application would be reviewed again at today's meeting. Responses will be mailed.

Commissioner Caracansi then asked Ms. Laura Vasile if she was currently the Health Director in Bethel. Ms. Vasile responded yes. Ms. Vasile said that she was here because she received a letter stating that she did not meet the minimum requirements for the Health Director position. She spoke to Dena Diorio and Dena assisted her. Ms. Vasile forgot to put on the application that she has a Masters Degree in Public Health from New York Medical College from 1993. She misunderstood the application because the Education Section reads Business, Trade or Correspondence School. She felt that if the Education Section had read "Other," she would have put her Masters of Public Health degree on the application. Ms. Vasile also attached copies of her diplomas and transcripts. Dena Diorio recommended that Ms. Vasile write a letter to the Commission and attend the meeting so that she could be reconsidered for the Health Director position. Chairman Finn stated that Ms. Vasile's application would be reviewed again at today's meeting.

Chairman Finn asks if anyone has any questions. Mr. Kleppin said he copied Dennis Elpern on the letter. Did Dennis contact the Civil Service Commission? Chairman Finn said that Dennis had not spoken to them about Mr. Kleppin's appeal. Ms. Vasile stated that it is difficult as an applicant to know how much information to provide when you are on a certain professional level. She just wanted that point known. Commissioner George asked how many inspectors are in Bethel? Ms. Vasile answered there is a full-time Chief, a full-time administrator and then there are five paid contracted employees: A doctor and nurses and a volunteer clinic team. Ms. Vasile explains that sometimes it is harder to be Health Director in a small department because manpower resources are always struggling. Chairman Finn asks if there are any other questions. He then thanks the applicants for coming in and tells them they will be notified by mail of the decision.

Deputy Fire Marshal / Fire Inspector - Chairman Finn reads aloud the protest letter submitted by Ms. Kelly Grover regarding the Deputy Fire Marshal/Fire Inspector testing process. She is protesting the test held on Tuesday, December 14, 2004. Issues that are mentioned: the lack of adequate timing (six day's notice) to prepare for a 100% oral exam; recommendation of an out-of-date book on the study guide. Ms. Grover believes the exam process was not taken seriously and shows a lack of concern for her career.

The behavior and inefficiency of the Civil Service Department to properly notify applicants of the study guide and the test date were unethical, disrespectful and uncivil. Ms. Grover has made some suggestions that may help improve the testing process such as:

- Having an established reading list/study guide for every existing exam.
- Distributing the reading list/study guide to all applicants when he/she applies.
- Ensure that all reading material listed on the reading list/study guide is readily available prior to the test date and still in print.
- That the reading list should be updated periodically not just when a test is coming up.
- A minimum of 30 days notice of the test date is given to all applicants.

Ms. Grover hopes that these issues will be rectified and that her suggestions may help set a precedent for future civil service tests held by Civil Service Department for the Fire Department. Ms. Grover feels that will show respect for the process and to the employees. Ms. Grover feels the City of Danbury was ignorant when it came to this opportunity to further her career. Her letter is a formal protest regarding the test for the Deputy Fire Marshal/Fire Inspector.

Chairman Finn asks if Ms. Grover has anything further to add. Ms. Grover further explains that the six day's notice was very unprofessional. She really wants to encourage a 30 day minimum notice. Ms. Grover states that the Firefighters Union has met with Fire Chief Pete Siecienski, Attorney Saranne Murray, and Dena Diorio, Director of Finance and Personnel, to discuss the issues that Ms. Grover has presented. She is not the only candidate upset with the process. She acknowledges that she is concerned about her career but she feels these changes could help other employees as well. Ms. Grover points out that she was on vacation when she found out about the exam. Another firefighter found out about the exam the day before the test was to be given. He was on vacation as well. Ms. Grover is offended about the whole process and she strongly encourages that something be done to rectify the situation especially a 30 day notice about the exam.

Commissioner George asks what has been the exam notice time in the past. Ms. Grover believes it has been a 21-day notice. The issue is that it is vague and is open to interpretation. Ms. Grover states that you know when there is a vacancy so there should be enough time to set up the exam. Commissioner George agrees. Chief Examiner Whitcomb states that at this stage, Ms. Grover's primary interest is to explore her concern with the Civil Service Commission. He explains that she is not as worried about this particular exam but she is worried about the long term. Ms. Grover explains that she was as concerned about the position itself. She wants the opportunity to be available to her. This was the first promotional exam she had taken and was frustrated with the whole process. She does not want to experience this again. Commissioner Caracansi asked Ms. Grover how did she do on the test. Ms. Grover replied that she did not do well at all. However, that is not her primary concern. She's more concerned with the whole procedure. For example, the recommended book was out of print. Chairman Finn said the book was available in the firehouse and in the Fire Marshal's office. Twelve candidates needed the one book that was no longer available.

Chairman Finn explained that he had correspondence between the Fire Chief, the Union and the Mayor discussing whether or not this exam was to be held or if the positions were to be filled at all. The process was put on hold. The announcement for the position was posted and applications were accepted. Chairman Finn was told several times the position would be filled. He was also told that the positions were put on hold and not be filled. This went back and forth. Fire Marshal Barry Rickert came to Chairman Finn to tell him to go ahead with the test because the training school begins at the end of January. Chairman Finn felt that there was not time enough to put together a test. However, he was told to put together a test immediately by the Chief, Union and the Mayor. Ms. Grover mentioned that the Union told the firefighters that a test would be given after January 1, 2005. Chairman Finn stated that was a mistake that the firefighters were told that. The Civil Service Commission was rushed. The

applications were reviewed. Then Chairman Finn had to meet with someone to put the test together. Chairman Finn said his mistake was that he went to the Fire Marshal to help put together a test. Chairman Finn should have gone to the Fire Chief instead. However, this would not have made any difference on the timetable. It was rushed. Chairman Finn told them the process: Put a test panel together of three people. Each person gives 10 questions. Out of the 30 questions, 10 questions are used. The test was put together after that. Chairman Finn said he spoke to the Fire Marshal about which books are easily accessible for the candidates. One book was removed because it was not accessible. The test date should be posted at the same time when applications were being accepted because it was such a short time period. From this point forward, the Civil Service Commission will not be involved in the testing process without timely notice. Commissioner Caracansi also stated that the lack of timeliness will not happen again. Chief Examiner Whitcomb explains to Ms. Grover that Commissioner Finn is just as aggravated as Ms. Grover. Ms. Grover felt the whole thing was unfair and she wanted to make that known.

Commissioner Caracansi notes that Ms. Grover's letter states "Please note this letter as my formal protest for the test for Deputy Fire Marshal." Commissioner Caracansi asks Ms. Grover to explain what the formal protest is. Ms. Grover is protesting the procedure leading up to the test. Commissioner Caracansi asks if it was the fact there was not a 30-day notice and that the book was out of print. Is that the protest? Ms. Grover says yes. Commissioner Caracansi states that the suggestions are well noted but the protest is the lack of a 30-day notice and the fact that the book was out of print. Commissioner Caracansi points out that the suggestion that there should be a study guide available for all Civil Service position is not a reason to protest the test. Chief Examiner Whitcomb states that Ms. Grover is distinguishing between protesting something she is not pleased with as opposed to appealing the decision. She is not appealing the decision and not trying to get us to overturn the decision. She's just protesting the process in the hope that it will be improved later. Commissioner Caracansi tells Ms. Grover that her points are well taken and as much as we can implement them, we will take it under advisement. Chief Examiner Whitcomb states that it is very good to make evaluations on how to structure the process for an individual job vacancy based on what the circumstances are surrounding that vacancy and that while some of those time frames would be ideal in general circumstances, it probably actually works to the disadvantage of all the applicants to lock us into something anymore than we need in order to make sure that we have the most fair, most equitable, most reasonable process. Commissioner Caracansi states that one of the problems that the Commissioners have is that they really don't know what it takes to be a Fire Marshal and you rely upon what you think is the reliable source, the Fire Marshal. And you would think that the Fire Marshal would say this is the source material that should be used for the test and be available to the applicants and these are the questions that should be on the test. That's where it should come from. From Commissioner Caracansi's perspective, Ms. Grover's concerns will force him to ask the questions about the material source and availability. Commissioner George states that if no one speaks up, then you don't know what's going on and that it takes a lot of guts to be honest and stand up for what you believe in. Chairman Finn stated that most of the time, people do not speak up. Chairman Finn offers every opportunity to the applicants to review the testing process with him. Chairman Finn states that Ms. Grover's letter will be discussed with the Commission members and she will receive a letter in the mail in follow-up.

Chairman Finn asks if any of the members would like to add any information in the follow-up letter to Ms. Grover. Commissioner Caracansi states that in the future the Commission will do its best to make sure the reading material is available and current for all position. He thought the more notice given on the testing date is not unreasonable. That's all we can do. Commissioner George said the corrections need to be made and make it fair. Since the response is coming from the Civil Service Commission, Commissioner Caracansi and Commissioner George would like to see the response letter to Ms. Grover in draft form. Chairman Finn agreed.

Chairman Finn reads aloud several letters from two Deputy Fire Marshal candidates (David Bonner and Michael Speed) who have asked to be deferred from the Eligibility List. They are now requesting that they be reinstated on the Eligibility List and not be deferred. Chairman Finn has been told that this been past practice. Chairman Finn would recommend that the Commission takes a vote tonight about whether or not the candidates remain on the list if he has been asked to be deferred. In the future, with all exams, it will be noted that if you do not accept the position when offered, you are subject to losing your position on the list unless there is a valid written excuse such as the candidate who is the military. The regulations state that candidates on the list is subject to the discretion of the Civil Service Commission. Chief Examiner Whitcomb states that the rule itself seems to be pretty clear that the Commission does have the discretion but there seems to be an impression out there that we are obligation to let them defer but if we follow Chairman Finn's suggestion, that gives the Commission control. The Fire Marshal school only takes place once a year. Two candidates were presented to the Common Council and approved. Chairman Finn presented a motion to accept the Fire Marshal eligibility list as it is for this current year. Commissioner George seconded the motion. Commissioner Caracansi agrees and wants to go on the record stating that in the future if a candidate declines the position or asks his eligibility to be deferred, he is to be removed from the list unless he has a military obligation or other valid reason. The motion passed unanimously.

Appeals for Health Director and Assistant Planning Director positions - Chairman Finn presented the applications of the candidates who filed appeals. Chairman Finn noted that on Ms. Vasile's original application she did not put her graduate degree. Commissioner Caracansi states that when he looked at the information that was provided for the this meeting, he did not understand why Ms. Vasile's initial application was rejected but if she didn't have the documents attached then that she has now, even though it was her error, he feels she is a qualified candidate for the Health Director position. Commissioner George states that her reservation about Ms. Vasile is that Ms. Vasile works in a smaller town than Danbury. The Health Director position in Danbury would be very different than where Ms. Vasile is coming from. Commissioner Caracansi points out that Ms. Vasile meets the minimum requirements of experience and education and that she should be considered for the Health Director position. Chairman Finn feels that Ms. Vasile also has the necessary qualifications and should be considered for the Health Director position. Ms. Vasile will be placed on the Eligibility List for the Health Director position.

Regarding Mr. Vinci's appeal for Health Director position: Commissioner Caracansi states that Mr. Vinci has the qualifications for the position. Commissioner George agrees and states that Mr. Vinci also has the necessary experience. Chairman Finn does not believe Mr. Vinci has the necessary experience but he does have the necessary education. Commissioner Caracansi points out that Mr. Vinci was the Health Director in Middletown and when you review his application, he more than meets the minimum requirements. Commissioner George agrees. Mr. Vinci will be placed on the Eligibility List for the Health Director position.

Regarding Mr. Kleppin's appeal for the Assistant Planning Director position: Commissioner Caracansi states that Mr. Kleppin meets the requirements for the position and he recommends that he be considered an applicant for the position. Commissioner George agrees. Mr. Kleppin will be placed on the Eligibility List for the Assistant Planning Director position.

Eligibility Lists

Librarian I - the test for this position was given in January 2004. It expires January 14, 2005. Commissioner Caracansi makes a motion to extend the list for one more year. Commissioner George seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Clerk Typist II - Commissioner Caracansi makes a motion to extend the list for one more year until December 30, 2005. Commissioner George seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Highway Superintendent - Chairman Finn makes a motion to table this to the next meeting. Commissioner Caracansi seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Animal Control Officer - Commissioner Caracansi makes a motion to extend the list for one more year until December 12, 2005. Commissioner George seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Correspondence: Chairman Finn has received correspondence from 16 candidates who took the Police promotional exams for them to review their tests. Appointments have been set for Friday, January 14, 2005 and Tuesday, January 18, 2005. The candidates want to see the breakdown of the test scores (oral and written) and reviewing any incorrect answers.

Senior Field Person - Chief Examiner Whitcomb states a test panel has been put together. The Tax Assessor's Office from New Fairfield, Brookfield, and Newtown will send people to serve on a testing panel. The panel members are putting together 10 test questions each. The test date has not been finalized but tentatively looking to set up the test between February 2 - 10, 2005. Chairman Finn recommends that the candidates receive 30 days notice of the test.

Webmaster - Chairman Finn spoke to Ms. Elizabeth McDonough, the Library Director, and she recommended that the test be held on January 9, 10 or 12, 2005. Chairman Finn explained to her that the Civil Service Commission had not reviewed the applications yet and he would contact her after the meeting to set up test dates. Commissioner Caracansi agreed. Ms. McDonough reviewed the applications and recommended four candidates as qualified. Commissioner Caracansi pointed out only four candidates had the Masters of Library Science degree. Commissioner George put forth a motion to accept Ms. McDonough's recommendations (the four candidates). Commissioner Caracansi seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Engineer I - Chairman Finn states that interviews were completed by the Mayor and Bill Buckley, Director of Public Works/Engineering, and a conditional offer has been made to a candidate.

Head Mechanic - This position is still open and in discussion at this time.

Lead Tree Operator - A candidate was selected from the list.

Foreman - There are four applications for the Foreman position. Applications were accepted until January 3, 2005. Chairman Finn puts forth a motion that the candidates be accepted and they can be interviewed by the Mayor and Bill Buckley, Director of Public Works/Engineering. Commissioner George seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

GIS Analyst - There are four applications for this position. Chairman Finn puts forth a motion that the candidates be accepted and they can be interviewed by the Mayor and Colleen Velez, the Tax Assessor. Commissioner Caracansi seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Health Inspector - There are three applications for this position. Chairman Finn puts forth a motion that the candidates be accepted and they can be interviewed by the Mayor and the Acting Health Director. Commissioner George seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Accountant - This position was advertised in the Sunday News-Times on January 9, 2005. This position opened up because the Accountant was promoted to Senior Accountant.

Chairman Finn made a motion to accept the previous meeting minutes. Commissioner George seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner George made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Caracansi seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Chairman Finn adjourned the meeting.

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